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ABSTRACT

Officially recognized in 1973, the "Indian Control of Indian Education" policy articulated philosophy, goals, principles, and directions designed to create an effective educational climate for Canada Natives. The policy acknowledged the need to improve educational opportunities for Indians as a preparation for total living, as a means of free choice of where to live and work, and as a means of enabling Indians to participate fully in their social, economic, political, and educational advancement. The policy was based on parental responsibility and local control of education and emphasized that the federal government must take the initiative in providing opportunities for Indians to train as teachers and counselors. While progress has been made since the policy's inception, problems of control and implementation must be addressed. Canada Natives are now involved in operating (managing) Indian schools but still lack the power to control and exercise directing influence. Policy implementation has been affected by dual administration of Indians and the Department of Indian Affairs rather than direct control, inadequate and restricted funding, and lack of enabling legislation. The policy is being reviewed in preparation for the 1987 First Ministers/First Nations Constitutional Meeting to identify legislation which will enable the shift of control to occur. (NEC)

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INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION: AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROGRESS

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Indian Control of Indian Education:
Authority and Responsibility for Progress.

In February 1973, the policy of "Indian Control of Indian Education" became the official policy of the Indians of Canada. It was derived from the need to identify and implement quality education for Indians by Indians. It was a significant and radical departure from centuries of colonial domination.

From the early 17th Century, Indian people of Canada were exposed to education designed and directed by missionaries and federal and provincial civil servants. The missionary approach was to "civilize and Christianize". This gave way in later years to the governments' approach of assimilation under the aegis of integration.

The history of formal education of Indians in Canada is marred by its failure to create a learning environment conducive to our people. For hundreds of years we have been victims of a colonial mentality which failed to recognize and utilize our people's culture in the educational process. The colonial mentality was intent only on transforming us into "their" culture. The results have been devastating.

In the 1960's, Indian leaders became forcibly adamant about the deplorable conditions of the Indian people. In response to the educational concerns raised, the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs within the federal government presented a report on Indian education. This report, presented in the House of Commons on June 22, 1971, unfolded before the Canadian public the educational problems facing Indian people.

Some of the findings were:

" - A drop-out rate four times the national average (96% of Indian children never finished high school);

- A related unemployment rate averaging 50% for adult males, going as high as 90% in some communities;

- "Inaccuracies and omissions" relating to the Indian contribution to Canadian history in texts used in federal and provincial schools.

- An age-grade retardation rooted in language conflict and early disadvantage, which accelerated as the child progressed through the primary and elementary grades;

- Less than 15% of the teachers had specialized training in cross-cultural education and less than 10% had any knowledge of Indian language;

- The majority of Indian parents were uninformed about the implication of decisions made to transfer children from reserve schools to provincial schools."

This report revealed after many years that the missionaries and civil servants had failed to administer an effective educational program for Indians. This failure has been attributed to several factors, namely: the absence of a clear philosophy of education with goals and objectives, failure to provide a meaningful program based on Indian reality, a lack of qualified teaching staff and inadequate facilities, and most significant, the absence of parental involvement in the education of their children.

These startling facts surrounding Indian education led to the Indian statement of education policy, "Indian Control of Indian Education". Presented to the federal government in 1972, it was subsequently given official recognition by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 1973. The policy articulates philosophy, goals, principles and directions designed to create an effective educational climate for Indian people.

"Indian Control of Indian Education" is based on two education principles recognized in Canadian society: parental responsibility and local control of education. The idea of parental responsibility means Indian input and Indian influence on the education process. Indian people are best equipped to develop a subitable philosophy of education based on Indian values adapted to modern living.

Local control of education is a fundamental concept in the philosophy of democratic governments. In fact, it is a clear feature which distinguishes free political systems from those of a totalitarian nature in which every facet of living comes under the scrutiny and control of the ruling party. Local control of education for Indians means a drastic change from the total control exerted on Indian people by the federal government.

The policy recognizes the need to improve educational opportunities for Indians. It states:

> "Our aim is to make education relevant to the philosophy and needs of Indian people. We want education to give our children a strong sense of identity with confidence in their personal worth and ability. We believe in education....
>
> ... as a preparation for total living.
>
> ... as a means of free choice of where to live and work.
>
> ... as a means of enabling us to participate fully in our own social, economic, political and educational advancement." (I.C.I.E., p. 1)

"Indian Control of Indian Education" is a four point policy dealing with parental responsibility, school programs, teachers and school facilities.

Parental Responsibility

While we assert that the Federal Government has the legal responsibility for Indian education as set down by the treaties and the Indian Act, we strongly maintain that only Indian people can develop a suitable philosophy of education based on Indian values adapted to modern living. We do not accept that the Government's financial responsibility justifies its dominance over our lives. Our policy demands the right of Indian parents to full participation in the education of their children (I.C.I.E., p. 5)

Programs

The curriculum must be so structured to utilize the child's awareness of his immediate environment (culture) and to use this as a springboard to learn about the outside world. Curriculum must be integrated throughout the total program with the teacher utililzing every oppportunity to relate the subject to the child. There must be community

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involvement in curricular content. No innovations in curriculum, teaching methods or pupil-teacher relationships can strike deep or permanent roots unless parents are convinced of their value. (I.C.I.E., p. 9)

Teachers and Counsellors

The policy paper emphasizes that the Federal Government must take the initiative in providing opportunities for Indian people to train as teachers and counsellors. Efforts in this direction require experimentation and flexible structures, which will allow the Indian person with talent and ambition to take advantage of the opportunity.

The policy states that Non-Indian teachers and counsellors should be given more training, over and above their regular normal courses, to prepare them for cross-cultural situations, to give them the skills to make the curriculum for Indian children more relevant and meaningful. (I.C.I.E., p. 18-19)

Facilities

Education facilities must be provided which adequately meet the needs of the local population. Substandard school facilities must be replaced and new buildings and equipment provided. (I.C.I.E., p. 21)

INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION in the most practical terms, means Indian input, Indian influence on the educational process. This may be on reserves or it may be in provincial or territorial schools. It is intended to result in improvement in the quality of education and in the creation of a learning environment which will give Indian children the chance to know their own language, culture and history, and to develop their unique talents to the maximum potential.

The policy has now been in existence for twelve years. While we acknowledge that progress has been made, we must also state that the desired outcome is far from realization. Certain problems that have emerged in the implementation of the policy require immediate serious consideration and resolution in order for the policy to be fully effective.

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Two main problems that must be addressed are one, the definition of control and secondly, a clear implementation plan. The contrast in perception of control and implementation by the Indian people and by the Department of Indian Affairs has impeded the progress of the policy.

The Definition of Control

To the Indian people, the concept of control is clearly articulated in the policy. It recognizes that the Federal government has the legal responsibility for Indian education as defined by the treaties and the Indian Act (I.C.I.E., P. 5). It further maintains that the Federal Government has the financial responsibility to provide education of all types and at all levels to status Indian people whether living on or off reserves (I.C.I.E., p. 3). It affirms that control/jurisdiction for Indian education can only derive from the Federal Government to Indian Bands (I.C.I.E., p. 5). In every case wherein directions/decisions are to be made which affect the education of Indian people, the policy states that parental responsibility must be respected and local Indian Bands must maintain the right to review and approve the conditions of any agreements (I.C.I.E., p. 6).

Control means that the federal government must transfer to local Bands the authority for the funds which are allotted for Indian education (I.C.I.E., p. 6) Band Councils, in turn, designate Education Authorities with set terms of reference to implement local control of education.

Control means that Indian people either directly or through their respective Bands and organizations will participate fully in the design and implementation of the education of their members.

Control within the policy includes Indian authority for establishing priorities, preparing budgets, hiring staff, and developing curriculum. However, the difference in perception of control by D.I.A. was evident soon after the policy was established. Herein lies the problem.

It can best be summed up by the fact that Indian people were/are permitted involvement but not control; Indian people were required to prove to D.I.A. their ability to administer education and were encouraged to begin by taking over specific program areas such as maintenance and transportation. This process of direct transfer of specific areas brought with it specific policies, procedures and budgets. The result of this

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process is that Indians are now operating Department of Indian Affairs programs. This was not the intent of the policy. This approach does not respond to the need for parents to be involved in goal setting.

What Indian people referred to as Indian Controlled Schools soon became known by the Department of Indian Affairs as Band-operated schools. This is significant in that controlling and operating are two entirely different concepts. To control is to have power over, to exercise directing influence, whereas, to operate means to manage, or to keep in operation. It is predictable that the difference in perception would lead to misunderstanding and impede the direction of the Indian Control of Indian Education policy.

Implementation of the Policy

Three specific problem areas exist, namely, dual administration, funding and legislation.

Dual administration refers to the fact that Indian Bands find themselves operating certain programs under supervision of the Department of Indian Affairs. The earlier discussion of control versus operating offers an explanation for this. It should be made clear, however, that the intent of the policy was not that Indian responsibilty for education would mean becoming yet another extension to the bureaucracy. The intent was not that there would be dual administration by Indians and the Department of Indian Affairs. Rather, through direct control it was to replace the complex bureaucracy already existing to administer Indian education.

In terms of funding, the policy states that "The Federal Government must take the required steps to transfer to local Bands the authority and the funds which are allotted for Indian education" (I.C.I.E., p. 6). The Department provides funding through Contributions to Bands. Funds for all programs must be within the limits of departmental budgets which means that funding is allocated specifically for certain areas, i.e. administration, school programs, with each category even further specified. This limits the possibility of priority setting or innovative planning by local Indian Bands.

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A further restraint is that Indian controlled schools require an administration which is local. The Department of Indian Affairs has centralized administrations. The cost factor is different. Under the present scheme, this poses additional problems for Bands. Not only is funding restricted to certain activities, it is also inadequate. Treasury Board expects that the transfer to local control and administration of education programs by Bands should not entail any additional costs.

The most serious problem, however, arises out of the lack of legislation. The Indian Act provides no direct legal basis for the transfer of education from the control of the Minister to Indian Bands. It authorizes the Minister to enter into agreements with provincial/territorial governments, public or separate school boards, religious or charitable organizations but not to Indian Bands (Indian Act, p. 51) The present authority allowing Indian Bands to administer education funds derives from various Treasury Board authorities, covering a range of educational and student support services which extend from pre-Kindergarten to post-school programs.

A review of these problems indicates that they are all directly related. If we examine the authority used to accommodate the policy of Indian Control of Indian Education, it reveals that certain restrictions - namely, the lack of enabling legislation authorizing the Minister to transfer control of education to Indian Bands, prevent the implementation to occur as it should. It relates directly to the problem of funding as well as the problem of dual administration. In fact, it explains the difference in perception of, or accommodation to, the concept of control.

Clearly, the basic fundamental impediment to Indian Control of Indian Education is the lack of enabling legislation. Without it, we can expect only minor adjustments to the existing situation. With it, an Indian Band, Organization, would be able to write its own Education Act, determine its own administrative unit, policies, aims and objectives.

Since the inception of the policy of Indian Control of Indian Education, efforts have been made by individuals, Bands, Tribal Councils, Indian organizations, D.I.A., to monitor developments related to the policy and to identify implementation mechanisms which would facilitate the development of quality education. These are documented in a number of studies, several of which are:

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- Education Funding - Education Quality
  by Sagkeeng Education Authority, Manitoba
  February, 1984.

- Indian Education Policy Review - Phase I
  D.I.A., Ottawa - December, 1981.

- Our Tomorrows - Today: Different Paths to
  Quality Indian Education in Manitoba
  by Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, 1984.

- Okanagan/Nicola Indian Quality of Education
  Study by A.J. More, U.B.C., Vancouver, B.C.
  May, 1984.

- National Indian Brotherhood Reports 1974-1976.

The Assembly of First Nations, formerly N.I.B., recognizes the need for a comprehensive review of all aspects of the policy of Indian Control of Indian Education, the need for clear implementation policies and enabling legislation. To this end, the Assembly of First Nations has negotiated an agreement with the Department of Indian Affairs which will enable the A.F.N. to address the problems associated with the policy of Indian Control of Indian Education. The National Indian Education Review of the A.F.N. is expected to be completed prior to the 1987 First Ministers/First Nations Constitutional Meeting. This direction is important. We must document the existing state of Indian education; we must identify policies required to accommodate the policy and we must identify legislation which will enable the shift of control to occur.

The direction of the 80's is toward Indian self-government: the assertion of rights to Nationhood. In November 1980, the Council of Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations unanimously endorsed "A Declaration of the First Nations" which states:

> We, the Original Peoples of this land know the Creator put us here. The Creator gave us laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind.

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The laws of the Creator defined our rights and
responsibilities The Creator gave us our spiritual
beliefs, our languages, our cultures, and a place
on Mother Earth which provided us with all our needs.
We have maintained our freedom, our languages and our
Traditions from time immemorial.
We continue to exercise the rights and fulfill the
responsibilities and obligations given to us by the
Creator for the lands on which we were placed.
The Creator has given us the right to govern ourselves
and the right to self-determination.
The rights and responsibilties given to us by the Creator
cannot be altered and taken away by any other Nation.

It is up to us, the Indian people of this country, to ensure our future through our own educational design, a future based on our reality. Only then, can we take our rightful place among the nations of our land.

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OTTAWA, CANADA

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